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ABSTRACT

A study of college placement offices was conducted to determine types of student services, staffing patterns, computer use, and strengths and weaknesses. The survey was limited to the 226 placement offices that returned the questionnaire. From the data gathered in the study, the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) most placement offices are centralized; (2) major services provided are resume assistance, letters of reference, alumni placement, job search strategy, career planning, and interview training; (3) placement staffs are small; (4) less than half of the placement offices use computers; (5) strengths of placement offices are personal contact, good working relationships in college, and outstanding staff; and (6) weaknesses are lack of staff, funds, and space. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made: colleges should invest more money and personnel resources in their placement offices; placement offices should evaluate their services against a standard of excellence; placement offices should use computers, develop their major strengths, and develop more communication with their institutions and students. A continuing study of placement offices also is recommended. (KC)

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A STUDY OF SERVICES OFFERED BY CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

INTRODUCTION

Serving the needs of students and alumni is one of the major reasons for the existance of placement offices. The services available to students at different colleges and universities throughout the country varies considerably. These services range from a one-person office that is understaffed and overworked to the other end of the spectrum where there are a staff of placement professionals to adequately serve the needs of students and alumni. In an effort to continually research various aspects of placement services with a view towards constantly improving the placement services available to college students and college graduates throughout the country, a study was conducted by the ASCUS Research Committee, Summer, 1978.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The purposes in surveying placement offices throughout the United States were to determine the answers to five major questions, namely:

1. What types of services are available to the college students and graduates from the various placement offices throughout the United States?
2. What type of staffing patterns are utilized by the various placement offices throughout the United States?
3. What type of computer utilization is currently operational in placement offices throughout the country as they deliver placement services to their candidates?

4. What are the major strengths of the placement services throughout the United States?
5. What are the major weaknesses of the placement offices in the United States that prevents them from offering full services to their candidates?

LIMITATIONS

The survey was limited to the 226 placement offices that returned the questionnaire. Tables I and II summarize the classification of the participating placement offices by type, and by the number of students attending their institution.

TABLE I

TYPES OF PLACEMENT OFFICES PROVIDING PLACEMENT SERVICES TO CANDIDATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Centralized	193
Decentralized	33

TABLE II

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ATTENDING THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS REPORTED IN THE SURVEY OF PLACEMENT OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Number of students Attending Institution	Number of Institutions
Under 1000	18
1000-5000	97
5001-10,000	39
10,001-15,000	21
15,001-20,000	13
20,001-25,000	13
25,001-30,000	9
Over 30,000	9

Utilization of placement services varied considerably throughout the placement offices in the United States. It ranged from under 20 percent of the students in 15 responding institutions to between 91 and 100 percent in 13 responding institutions. Table III reports the participation of students utilizing placement services.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT UTILIZING PLACEMENT SERVICES AS REPORTED BY INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Percentage of Students	Number of Institutions
Under 20%	15
21% - 30%	29
31% - 40%	22
41% - 50%	24
51% - 60%	22
61% - 70%	18
71% - 80%	42
81% - 90%	12
91% - 100%	13

The major services available to students from placement offices throughout the United States as reported by directors, summer, 1978 are: (1) Resume, letter preparation assistance, (2) Maintaining letters of reference, (3) Alumni placement (first job and additional ones), (4) Job search strategy assistance, (5) Career planning, (6) Interview training. Table IV summarizes services available.

TABLE IV

SERVICES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS AND ALUMNI BY PLACEMENT OFFICES AS REPORTED BY INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Services	Number of Institutions
Resume, letter preparation assistance	224
Maintaining letters of reference	222
Alumni placement (first job and additional ones)	221
Job search strategy assistance	214
Career planning	198
Interview training	194
Facilitating employer presentations on campus	184
Resumes sent to employers	176
Arranging employer contacts with faculty and/or student organizations	167
On-campus interviewing for summer and/or co-op employment	138
Testing, e.g. aptitude tests; personal interest inventory; coordination of GRE, LSAT, etc.	82
Seminars	80
Programs	79
Conferences	49
Special scheduling for affirmative action interviewing	41

Placement services throughout the country can be no better than the staff that provides the services. The majority of placement offices reporting were quite lean on professional staff members. Specifically, 98 of the 226 reporting institutions had only 1 professional staff member. Three reporting institutions listed having one third-time professional staff member. Twelve reporting institutions listed having one half-time professional. While one institution reported one three-quarter time professional. And as amazing as it may seem, one institution reported their entire professional staff was a person working one-quarter time. Table V summarizes the staffing patterns utilized by placement offices throughout the United States.

TABLE V

STAFFING PATTERNS FOR PROFESSIONAL AND CLERICAL STAFF UTILIZED BY PLACEMENT OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Professional		Clerical	
Members	# of Institutions	Members	# of Institutions
1	98	1	83
2	45	2	53
3	34	3	23
4	12	4	14
5	12	5	8
6	3	6	8
7	4	7	7
8	2	8	6
9	3	9	5
10	2	10	2
11	2	11	1
14	2	12	4
20	1	20	1
3/4 time	1	23	1
1/2 time	12	1/2 time	16
1/3 time	3	1/3 time	2
1/4 time	1		

In today's world the capabilities of the computer is well recognized. Table VI summarizes the utilization of computers by placement offices throughout

the United States. Perusal of Table VI would suggest that we raise the question, Has the age of the computer passed the placement offices by? Of the 226 placement offices surveyed only 88 indicated that they are currently utilizing the computer for any placement activities. Sixty-five officers reported their prime use was preparation of mailing labels to mail job contacts to candidates. The next highest use by computers was for summary reports or follow-up reports on placement activities with 34 offices reporting this type.

TABLE VI

UTILIZATION OF COMPUTERS BY PLACEMENT OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Type of Computer Service	Number Reporting
Mailing labels to students regarding employer information	65
Providing summary reports regarding placement activities	34
Print-outs to students of employers coming to campus	12
Summary reports for students and/or faculty regarding employer activity	11
Providing mini resumes to employers on students	8
Preparation of bulletin board notices	6

Placement officers were given the opportunity to respond to two general types of questions, namely: What are the greatest strengths of your placement operations? and What are your greatest weaknesses of your placement operations? Tables VII and VIII summarize the placement offices perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses.

TABLE VII

STRENGTHS OF PLACEMENT OFFICES AS PERCEIVED BY PLACEMENT OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Strengths	Number of Respondents
Personal contact with students/alumni	75
Faculty/administration/department support--good relationship	42
Outstanding staff (professional and clerical)	37
Counseling	32
"Same day" mailing of credentials/prompt service	29
Directory of current job openings/mailing	26
Career library	25
Instructional programs/seminars/presentations	21
Employer relations	17
Service	16
Recruiting program	15
Does good job in placement/results	15
New facilities/excellent facilities	10
Association with school system excellent	9
Preparation of our students in the area of job seeking skills	9
Reputation of office with students and employers	9
Appearance of credentials and resume	8
Open/clear channels of communications to employers, faculty, students	7
Dedication	7
Efficient, productive operation/well organized	5
Location of office	4
Outreach effort	4
Quick response to candidates and employers	3
Adequant funding	3
Visible to students and alumni	3
Good interviewing facilities	3
Interview opportunities on campus	3
Good handouts	3
Career and graduate school day	2
Cooperation of students	2
Strong interview and resume workshops-using own videotapes	2
Accessive	2
Resume and correspondence writing assistance	2
Young staff	2
Staff workshops	2
Part-time job placement	2

TABLE VII

WEAKNESSES OF PLACEMENT OFFICES AS PERCEIVED BY PLACEMENT OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, SUMMER, 1978

Weaknesses	Number of Respondents
Need additional staff	85
Lack of funds (including travel and equipment money)	58
Can use more space	30
No organized career planning or job search activities/more development needed	28
Work load on personnel/clerical staff	20
Physical location/facilities	16
Need more companies/recruiters on campus	16
Need more computer time/computer services	15
Lack of interview space	12
Need better support from college administration and faculty	10
Follow-up	7
Not enough time in field visiting schools, administrators, employers	6
Need for larger resource center	5
Not enough time	5
Coordination with academic departments	4
More attention needs to be directed to needs of Liberal Arts majors	4
Communication - campus wide	4
Students don't take advantage of services	4
Not enough early contact with undergraduates/students	3
Office involved in other campus projects which limits commitment to career planning and placement functions	3
Ability to rapidly circulate information on job openings	3
Not enough time for job counseling	2
Insufficient information on employers	2
Organization of materials to be stored/filing system	2
Need to reduce "paper-shuffle"	2
Have to little feed-back from candidates	2
The need to reach all students	2
No alternative to teaching sources	2
Limited services	2
Summer employment services	2
Internship coordination	2
Student apathy	2
Not enough time spent on employer relations	2

CONCLUSIONS

From the data gathered in the study, the following conclusions seem appropriate:

1. The majority of placement offices in the United States are centralized as opposed to decentralized.

2. The major services provided by placement offices throughout the United States are: (a) resume, letter preparation assistance, (b) maintaining letters of reference, (c) alumni placement (first job and additional ones), (d) job search strategy assistance, (e) career planning, (f) interview training.

3. The majority of placement offices staffs are quite lean in size. Most placement offices reported having only one professional staff member, one clerical staff member, and some student workers.

4. Utilization of computers by placement offices throughout the United States is operational in less than half of the placement offices. It would seem as of this date that most placement offices have not come of age in computer utilization.

5. The strengths of placement offices in the United States are, namely:

   A. Personal contact with students and alumni

   B. Good working relationship and support with faculty, administration, and department

   C. Outstanding staff, both professional and clerical, working in placement offices

6. The primary weaknesses of placement offices are:

   A. Lack of staff

   B. Lack of funds

   C. Lack of space

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Institutions should commit larger resources to the placement function. These resources would include people, facilities, and dollars. This would allow placement offices to more effectively carry out their prime function.

2. Placement offices should evaluate their services offered against a standard of excellence. ASCUS, our professional association, has prepared a formal evaluation that placement offices could utilize.

3. Placement offices throughout the country should investigate the utilization of computers in the placement operation. Effective utilization of advanced technology should be an enhancement to the effectiveness of placement functions throughout the country.

4. Placement offices should continue to cultivate their three major strengths, namely:

   A. Personal contact with students and alumni

   B. Good working relationship and support with faculty, administration, and department

   C. Outstanding staff, both professional and clerical, working in placement offices

5. Placement offices should develop a communications channel which will allow them to tell the placement story more effectively to their individual institutions. Once this is accomplished, most likely institutions will commit more resources to overcome the three primary weaknesses of placement offices, namely:

   A. Lack of staff

   B. Lack of funds

   C. Lack of space

6. The present type of study should be continued over a period of time. Thus enabling ASCUS, our professional association, to better serve its institutions.